

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Prairie Grove School
Other name/site number School District 65, Allison School / 131-0000-0204

2. Location

Street & number Township Rd. "H", SW of int. with Township Rd. 232 ☐ not for publication
City or town Seneca ☒ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Nemaha Code 131 Zip code 66538

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 1/23/06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register. _____
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National _____
Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
☐ removed from the National _____
Register
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Prairie Grove School
Name of Property

Nemaha Co., Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Public Schools of Kansas

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Plain Traditional

LATE VICTORIAN: Second Empire

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Limestone

Walls: Weatherboard

Roof: Metal

Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Prairie Grove School

Name of Property

Nemaha Co., Kansas

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1886-1955

Significant Dates

1886

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stewart, Charles

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Les Droge, Rt. 1, Box 114, Seneca, KS 66538

Prairie Grove School

Name of Property

Nemaha Co., Kansas

County and State

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property Less than one.**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	4	7	4	6	8	6	0	4	4	2	9	8	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing										

2															
Zone	Easting				Northing										

3															
Zone	Easting				Northing										

4															
Zone	Easting				Northing										

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared ByName/title DarAnn Swayze Rial, historical writer; edited by KSHS staff

Organization _____

Date 9/01/04Street & number 906 North 8thTelephone 785-336-0053City or town SenecaState KSZip code 66538**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property OwnerName Rex FarwellStreet & number Rt. 1, Box 111

Telephone _____

City or town SenecaState KSZip code 66538

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

DESCRIPTION

Summary

Constructed in 1886, the Prairie Grove School sits on an acre of uncultivated farmland, located ten miles north of Seneca, (pop. 2000), Nemaha County, KS and a mile south of Nebraska state boundary on Highway 36. The frame schoolhouse stands in a rural area, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 7, Nemaha Township 1 South, Range 12 East. Bounded on the east by gravel road "H", the Prairie Grove schoolhouse has cornfields on the south and west, and the homestead of the landowner on the north. A storm cellar with double doors remains on the northwest corner of the acre. The building maintains an eastern orientation on a ridge overlooking the valley formed by nearby Nemaha River and Turkey Creek off Road 232, which runs east and west.

Elaboration

The one-story, vernacular clapboard building measures 24 feet north to south by 42 feet east to west, has a eastern façade with double entrance, two six-foot entry doors topped with matching horizontal transom windows, which flank a centrally placed double-hung window. Limestone rock from the nearby quarry on Burger Creek serves as the foundation, path, and front steps for the open front porch, which is made of concrete. The short wood-frame bell tower is capped with a mansard-roof belfry that is crowned by an ornate flagpole with weathervane. Diamond-shaped shingles cover the belfry, which has pointed-arched louvered vents on four sides and houses the original, functioning bell. The gable roof was covered with corrugated sheet metal at an unknown date.

Narrow clapboard siding covers the exterior of the building. Three, 4/4 double-hung, wood sash windows (33 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches x 83 inches) are equally spaced along the southern and northern sides of the building. The original framed, mesh chicken wire screens each of the windows.

The original exterior doors were recently damaged when vandals gained entry and have been replaced with the original interior cloakroom doors. Access into the classroom is gained by entering through either the girls' or boys' cloakrooms (six ft. x eight ft. vestibules). Eleven-foot ceilings emphasize the cloakrooms (vestibules), which have tongue and groove wainscot finish on the walls. The original coat hooks and lunch shelves line the walls of the cloakrooms (vestibules).

The interior space of the large central classroom measures 24 feet by 30 feet. The interior walls are wood lath and plaster, tongue and groove wainscoting accents the walls. The wainscoting measures 28 inches high and is capped with a chair rail. The classroom ceiling has been lowered to 8 feet. The two-inch wide oak floors are in good condition. A seven-inch, circular raised stage snuggles between the cloakrooms (vestibules) on the eastern end of the room. The brick chimney rises from the middle of the

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

west wall, where the school was originally heated with a pop-belly coal stove, but was later converted to a fuel oil heater. Six light fixtures hang from the ceiling.

The Prairie Grove School closed at the end of the 1964 school year and the land reverted to the landowner. The building was sold at auction for \$220 to Och Worrick, who donated the building to an alumni association of 13 former students, called Old Settlers. They maintained the building and held yearly reunions until 2001 when only three members of the group remained. The interior and exterior are structurally sound and maintains a high degree of interior and exterior architectural integrity of the period.

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Prairie Grove School is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the *Historic Schools of Kansas* MPS with statewide significance under Criterion A for its historical association with education in rural Nemaha County, Kansas, and under Criterion C for its architectural significance as a traditional wood-frame, one-room schoolhouse with a Second Empire-style, mansard-roof belfry. No single building type in American architecture more vividly represents the communal efforts of the settlers, who donated time, labor and materials to provide places of learning for their children. The Prairie Grove Schoolhouse served Nemaha Country School District Number 65 from the fall of 1886 until 1964, when unification forced its closing.

History

For more than 250 years, America's country schools were the heart of American education. In 1930, there were approximately 150,000 one-teacher schools in the United States. These schools were funded with public money and usually stood on an acre of land donated by a farmer. Located in small, independent school districts, they were sustained with the barest of resources by civic-minded farmers who voted taxes, set budgets, constructed schools, elected school boards, hired teachers, and approved curricula. Their efforts virtually wiped out illiteracy, firmed their children's devotion to democracy, and opened up new vistas beyond the borders of their lives.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill was passed by Congress on May 22, 1854. This bill provided for the organization of the territories of Kansas and Nebraska allowing the people of the region to decide whether they would allow slavery within their borders. The Kansas-Nebraska Act defined the boundaries of the New Territory and gave it the name of Kansas. Kansas made provision for free public education when it entered the Union in 1861.

Farmers were confident that they could control school matters through the district school system with which they were familiar, but educators had a different view. "Not more than one in four of the teachers of the common schools of the State are fitted for the place he occupies," the Kansas state superintendent wrote in 1874, "in respect to scholarship, methods, principles of teaching, general intelligence, ability to organize and govern a school, breadth, symmetry, and poise of character."

The teacher classified her students as she thought best and drew up her own teaching schedule. She never permitted her schedule to dominate her. She varied her program as she wished, so that on some days her students would be ciphering down at the board instead of reciting, or preparing for a spelldown,

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

or memorizing a poem or an oration or drawing a map of Coronado's march for history and geography, or writing invitations to their parents to visit school on parents' day.

The entire community revolved their activities around these schools. At various times they were used as churches, polling places, sites of political caucuses, and meeting halls for local organizations. But as America urbanized and the movement to consolidate took hold in rural counties, these little centers of learning were left at the margins of the educational system. Until consolidation forced the closure of many of Kansas' one-room schools in the 1950s and 1960s, Kansas children learned their alphabets and algebra in small groups taught by only one teacher.

The history of one-room schoolhouse construction, in its initial phase, parallels the history of vernacular architecture in the United States. "Vernacular" means native, the panoply of traditional building materials and forms used in a given place, learned locally or imported with new settlers. Some architectural historians view vernacular architecture as "place-related inflection of culture" (Doug Swaim, *Carolina Dwelling*, 1978).

Although published architectural plans for school buildings were available for schools as early as 1832, homesteaders used the resources at hand to erect school with little inclination to follow elaborate school designs. Most one-room schoolhouses had an obvious church influence to the construction. In the Kansas legislature's second biennial report for 1879 and 1880, Haskell and Wood Architects of Topeka, Kansas, published details for a school recalling colonial churches except for a front façade with a double entrance and a Palladian window in the middle, with matching curved hood molds above the doors and double-hung windows.

The Prairie Grove Schoolhouse exemplifies the prototypical, one-room country schoolhouse in its form and design. The one-story, front-gabled schoolhouse is typical of the one-room prairie schoolhouses constructed in rural Kansas during the last half of the nineteenth century. A vestibule capped by a small mansard-roof belfry projects from the building's façade. The large, 4/4 double-hung windows provided much needed breezes to cool the classroom. During cold weather, it was heated with coal.

The school district was organized in 1872 and was the sixty-fifth school district to be organized in Nemaha County, thus it was numbered 65. There were only a few landowners so one or two married women who were under age were included in the count to make the required number of pupils to form a district. Some of the early pioneers were the Gilmores, Taylors, Robbins, Allisons, Poppes and Drogas.

In the fall of 1874, after a difficult summer of a grasshopper invasion into the farmlands, the school patrons of the newly formed district decided to have a school for their children. Lizzie Taylor, a seventeen-year-old lady who had come to Seneca with her parents as a small child and lived in a log house, the first built in Seneca, was the first teacher at the first school in District 65. Lizzie Taylor was

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paid \$25.00 per month, twelve of which she paid to Mrs. Will Allison for her board and room. Lizzie Taylor had been hired to teach for five months, but she only taught for three months as there had been an error in the levy. Those first classes were held in a room of the home of Mr. And Mrs. William Robbing, but later in the year, they moved to the home of Mr. And Mrs. Emil Schultz. The children walked to the school, carrying Bibles, hymn books, almanacs and histories.

In 1875, the area surrounding the school was, and in 2004, still is a rural farm community. No village or incorporated town existed or exists within approximately ten miles of the school. Prairie Grove School is located about fifteen miles south of Pawnee City, Nebraska, and ten miles north of Seneca, Kansas. As the enrollment increased, the people saw the need for a school building. Gus Allison gave an acre of land to the district for the new school building with the understanding that the land would revert to the Allisons in the event the school closed. The land was accepted by the school board, which included W.S. Johnson, Andrew Taylor and Henry Poppe. The State Official Foundation date was 1875 and the contract for the building was submitted on September 15, 1875. A name was chosen after the small, frame school building was completed that described the vast prairie that spread for miles around the school. Since the school was nestled in a grove of trees, it seemed most fitting to call it "Prairie Grove". Mattie Berger had the honor of being the first teacher to teach in the new schoolhouse. She was paid \$25.00 per month.

By 1885, the boundaries for District 65 had been extended, bringing more students to the schoolhouse. More room was needed in a building that could be heated. In a special election held on July 6, 1885, the school district patrons approved bonded indebtedness for building a bigger schoolhouse. The contractor chosen to build the school was Charles Stewart of Seneca. Landowner Gus Allison assisted Mr. Stewart.

The schoolhouse was built in 1886, enlarging the existing frame schoolhouse, adding a stage, cloakrooms, chimney for coal stove. The entry door centered on the eastern façade was converted to a window and the original windows on either side were converted to two doors allowing entry through the cloakrooms. The school was insured for \$3,000 and the contents for \$500. The name, Prairie Grove, was continued, but it was better known to the community as the "Allison School". E.H. Chapman was County Superintendent at that time and Estelle Stewart was hired to teach at \$35.00 per month. In 1893 the enrollment reached fifty-seven students. During the school term of 1897-98 the enrollment reached sixty-three. Three generations of the Allison, Droge, Schultz, and Wissler families attended school there. Other families who lived in the district who had two generations of students attending the Prairie Grove School were the following: Kerl, Werner, Korber, Katz, Wiesedeppe, Poppe, and Rilingier.

Eloise Rinne of Overland Park, Kansas, the only Prairie Grove teacher still living, recalls teaching at the country school. She remembers the outdoor toilets and carrying coal from the coal shed to heat the school. Water was brought from home each day and stored in a crock with a spigot on it.

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

"One of the things that impressed me most, you taught all ages of children, but when you gave one group a lesson, they worked on it. They never interrupted while you taught the others. I believe they were more capable of thinking things through. They had to." Eloise Rinne added. She said that discipline was never a problem for her at Prairie Grove as long as the children were kept busy.

Les Droge of Seneca, Kansas is proud of his rural education. He shares stories about his memories of the country school: McGuffey Readers, wooden desks, slate blackboards, potbellied stoves, kerosene lamps, and screened privies. The children walked, rode horses, or drove buggies to school along dirt roads. The students had two programs each year. The Christmas program was held in the evening and everyone joined them for a potluck dinner on the last day of school. More than fifty different teachers taught kindergarten through eighth grade in the schoolhouse. School board members who gave more than twenty years of service were: Louis Wiesedeppe, J.M. Rilinger, and Christ Katz. A number gave ten to fifteen years of service including: R. T. Allison, Will Katz, Nathan Allison, Glen Allison, and Herbert Marteney. Henry Droge and John Wissler each served nine years.

The District Superintendent notified the school board in 1961 that state regulations demanded that the school year be extended to nine months from eight months. At the spring school meeting in 1963, the patrons voted to close Prairie Grove to unify with the Bern Public School, District 92. The unification date was May 10, 1963. Prairie Grove was the last one teacher school with continuous service to be disorganized in Nemaha County. Mrs. David Rinne was the last teacher, earning \$420 per month.

An auction of the contents and schoolhouse was held on October 24, 1963. Gene Toby of Seneca was the auctioneer. Oth Warrick bought the school building, including the bell, for \$220.00. Due to interest shown to preserve the Prairie Grove Schoolhouse, Mabel Wiesedeppe Grollmes solicited donations. On January 4, 1964, a meeting was held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Droge, when the group decided to organize into an alumni group called "The Old Settlers". The alumni group of thirteen former students purchased the building for the auction price. Nathan Allison agreed to allow the building to remain on his property. A reunion date of former teachers, pupils and parents was set for August 16, 1964.

More than fifty former students and teachers attended the first reunion. The oldest pupil present was Mrs. Anna Poppe Siems of Beatrice, Nebraska, and the oldest teacher was Lela Lightbody Crandall of Corning. Until recently, the alumni group maintained the building and held yearly reunions of all former teachers and students. The school is currently vacant.

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

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Nemaha County Clerk; Commission letters: 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004.

Old Settler's Alumni scrapbook, Lester Droge trustee

Sandehn, Nancy, Preservation Planner. *A Report on the Cultural Resources of Nemaha County, Kansas*; Glacial Hills R.C. & D. Inc. and The Nemaha County Historical Society, MoKan Regional Council, 1302 Faraon, St. Joseph, MO, 1992.

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Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated is located on property located in the NE ¼ Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 12 East in Nemaha County, Kansas. The property is bounded to the east by Country Road "H" to the east, corn fields on the south and west, the homestead of the landowner is on the north, which is on East to West Road 232.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This nomination includes the school building and all of the property historically associated with the school.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The following information is consistent for all photographs:

1. Prairie Grove School
2. Nemaha Co., Kansas
3. Photograph by Patrick Zollner
4. April 7, 2005
5. Negative on file at Kansas State Historical Society

The following information is specific to each photograph:

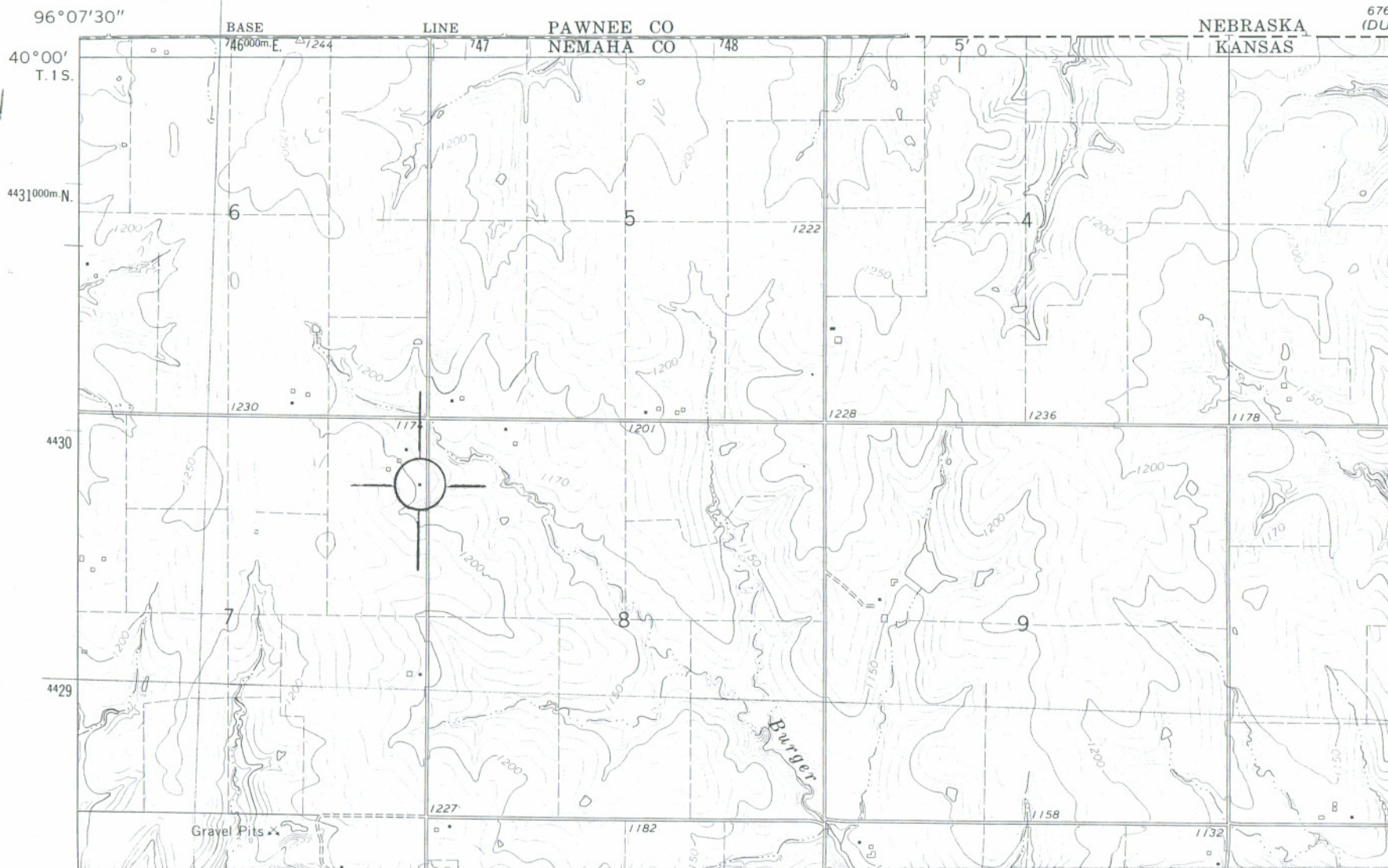
<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description of View</u>
1.	View from the east.
2.	View from the northeast.
3.	View from the northwest.
4.	View from the south/southeast.
5.	View of south entrance cloakroom.
6.	View of classroom from the east.
7.	View of classroom and stage from the west.
8.	View of raised stage from the west.

6764 11 SW
(PAWNEE CITY)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF

6764
(DU)



Prairie Grove School
Nemaha Co., Kansas
UTM Coordinates:
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